

And Avraham was old, well on in years. (24:1)

The *Midrash* distinguishes between *ziknah*, old age, and *ba ba'yamim*, getting on in years. They maintain that some people attain *ziknah*, but do not have their "days." Others have their *yamim*, days, but do not have their old age. Avraham *Avinu* had both; he was well-on in years, and he also achieved *ziknah*. What is the meaning of this *Midrash*? How does it apply to Avraham? *Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl*, explains that *ziknah* is a reference to the past, to what one learned as a youth, to the *Torah* and *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, which he has attained. *Yamim* is an analogy for the present, being attuned to the "day", to the occurrences of the times, to society's constant changes in culture, perspective and values.

There are people who are "with it", attuned to the present. They acknowledge the changes in lifestyle which modernity engenders, and they react to them. These individuals however, have divorced themselves from the past. They perceive the *Torah* and the *yirah* they had achieved in the past to be ancient relics. These people have *yamim*, but no *ziknah*. There are yet others who have successfully maintained their spiritual stature throughout the changing scenery of the years gone by. They are erudite and deeply religious, actually presenting themselves in an image of a different era. They, too, present a problem - they live in the past. They have *ziknah*, but no *yamim*. They have not yet learned how to harmonize the present with their glorious past. They cannot relate to today's youth or establish any form of dialogue with them, because they live in a different world.

Avraham *Avinu* was *zakein u'ba bayamim*; he maintained the traditions and observance of the past and was able to integrate them into the present. He had the capacity for presenting the *Torah* to a society alien to its teachings and precepts. He understood their psyche, teaching in accordance with the people's level of understanding. He taught a world, because he was not divorced from it. While he maintained his distance from their way of life, he did not disassociate himself from understanding their perspective.